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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 001389

SIPDIS

EAP/K JULIE KIM-JOHNSON

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [MNUC](#) [KN](#) [KS](#) [CH](#) [JA](#) [RU](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: FRENCH ENVOY ON INFORMATIONAL MISSION TO NORTH
KOREA

REF: SECSTATE 105519

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Kathy Allegrone, Reasons 1.
4(b), (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: French officials, including senior presidency staff, confirmed that newly appointed Special Envoy to North Korea Jack Lang is going on an information gathering mission to Six-Party capitals to provide President Sarkozy a more comprehensive "snapshot" of the DPRK denuclearization issue. The GOF committed to working with us on timing as well as the message conveyed in Lang,s proposed visit to Pyongyang the week of November 9. Post will continue to press French counterparts to ensure USG concerns are well understood. END SUMMARY.

TIMING OF PYONGYANG VISIT

¶2. (C) On October 13, Political Minister Counselor delivered to Elyse (Presidential) Advisor for Asia Bertrand Lortholary reftel points reinforcing the need for coordination on the timing and substance of DPRK Presidential Envoy Jack Lang,s visit to North Korea. Lortholary took the message on board very seriously and confirmed that Lang is going on an information gathering round of visits to Washington, Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing, and possibly Moscow before traveling to Pyongyang. Although the exact timing remains undetermined, the French have proposed to the North Koreans a visit for the week of November 9. Lortholary promised to let us know if or when Pyongyang responds, so that they can work with us to de-conflict dates with a potential Bosworth visit, if necessary.

¶3. (C) Lortholary noted that the issue of North Korean denuclearization is not well-known in Paris, particularly through the lens of the other nuclear crises. The Lang initiative was created in part because Sarkozy realized, shortly before UNGA, that the French did not have a first-hand picture of North Korea at a time when France is highly engaged on the broad non-proliferation account. Lortholary stressed that Lang,s trip is designed to better inform Sarkozy of the issue through high-level consultation with the Six Parties. He added this was not necessarily a prelude to upgraded, bilateral relations, as is rumored in the French press.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE DPRK

¶4. (C) Citing the French voting record as a P-3 member, Lortholary stressed the GOF,s support for the Six Party Talks framework, and did not wish to complicate the process in any way. As one of only two EU countries without diplomatic relations with North Korea (the other being Estonia), Lortholary remarked that France has virtually no

contact with the DPRK other than through their modest UNESCO delegation in Paris. He emphasized that the French will take into account whether Pyongyang makes progress in denuclearizing and human rights as well as the state of North and South Korean relations in considering possible diplomatic ties. Lortholary stressed that, "eventually, one day, France will rethink if it needs to reestablish relations." Lortholary described possible French diplomatic recognition as a "small card to play," but stressed it would be used only to advance shared goals, referring to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and DPRK commitments made in the September 19, 2005 Six-Party Talks Joint Statement. He stated that the French are sensitive to the North Korean "charm offensive" and do not wish for the DPRK or other problem states to misinterpret Lang,s information gathering visit.

15. (C) In a separate conversation on October 9, Counselor to FM Kouchner in charge of Asia issues Errki Maillard called Political Counselor to underscore that Lang,s mission was "for information only" and designed to listen to all the parties and in particular the U.S. as well as to state that the GOF acknowledges and supports the primary role of the Six-Party Talks process. Political Counselor will meet with Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials on October 14 to deliver reftel points and reiterate the need for collaboration and coordination.

LIMITED MANDATE OF LANG APPOINTMENT

16. (C) Lortholary stressed that Lang,s appointment was meant to be short-term, unlike similar special envoy positions in the United States. Lortholary alluded to Lang,s previous

six-month tenure as special envoy to Cuba as an indication of the length of this current assignment.

WASHINGTON VISIT

17. (C) Lortholary acknowledged that Lang may not be able to meet with the Secretary, but asked whether the Secretary might be able to "drop by" a meeting, if scheduled, with Deputy Secretary Steinberg. Having already met with Japanese FM Okada and South Korean FM Yu, the French anticipate a similar meeting with Chinese FM Wen and wish to continue elevating the issue to the most senior level. In response to an inquiry on a trip to Russia, he mentioned that discussions are underway for a meeting with FM Lavrov. Calling Lang,s mission a completely transparent process, Lortholary also noted that the French have also requested a meeting with White House National Security Advisor General James Jones.

18. (C) COMMENT: The French welcome engagement in Washington and hope that Lang will be fully briefed on our views during his consultation. They understand fully that Lang,s appointment has caused a stir and seek to avoid crossing wires with us on the DPRK. That said, Lang himself is likely to state publicly that France should establish relations with the DPRK and invite Kim Jong-Il to Paris, much as he did during his trip to Cuba. As Paris 1379 made clear, we agree with FM Kouchner,s assessment that there are very low expectations for what Lang will hear or that his recommendations would be acted up. END COMMENT.

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